

taxes. Since we were both elected, families and businesses have increasingly left New York for lower taxes, better schools, better roads, and warmer weather in Florida.

Asking taxpayers to bail out failed politicians in liberal States like New York and Illinois and save them from their own bad decisions isn't fair to the taxpayers in fiscally responsible States like Florida. After all, many Florida taxpayers left New York because of Cuomo's tax policy.

It makes no sense. Congress has already allocated more than \$4.5 trillion to address this crisis. Think about it. We just passed a nearly \$1 trillion relief package 4 weeks ago. This is all borrowed money. The Federal Government doesn't have savings for a rainy day, and we still don't know how much money is unspent from the previous coronavirus relief packages. How can we possibly justify spending more money right now? We don't even know what we might need to spend money on.

And for States like California, we know they don't need it. California's tax revenues for this fiscal year is running \$9 billion, or 18 percent, above projections. Personal income tax revenue in October was \$1 billion—15 percent higher than in the previous October, and sales taxes were up 9.2 percent. For the last 4 months, overall revenue in California has exceeded spring forecasts and even 2019 collections. But that hasn't kept Governor Newsom and his far left buddies in Congress from keeping their hands out for more money.

We cannot simply throw massive spending at this with no accountability to the current and future American taxpayer. It is shameful.

We have also heard the Biden administration and its nominees call for a new national minimum wage of \$15 an hour. It is clear that these folks haven't talked to business owners. Small businesses in America are struggling like never before, especially in liberal States, where repeated lockdowns have exacerbated their work to stay open. And President Biden believes now is the time to slap another mandate on their back and drive even more Americans chasing the dream of this country out of business? I am not sure how you could possibly be more detached from reality.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, a federally mandated \$15 minimum wage would cost as many as 3.7 million Americans their jobs.

Let me tell you, I know what it is like to be poor, to live in public housing, to not have enough money to afford healthcare for a family member. I watched my parents struggle for work. I don't want any family to go through what I went through.

I ran for office because I wanted to help struggling families like the one I grew up in to have the chance to live the American dream. So when I hear folks like Ms. Yellen say that job loss

from a minimum-wage mandate is "very minimal, if anything," it really leaves me at a loss. Watching 3.7 million Americans lose their jobs will not be minimal.

Adding insult to injury, we have heard great praise for the implementation of a carbon tax. Let's remember, this was part of the Green New Deal, which would be a disaster if passed. According to estimates from the Heritage Foundation, a carbon emissions tax would cost the country 1.4 million jobs while decreasing our GDP by \$3.9 trillion and reducing income for a family of four by \$40,000, with disproportionate costs falling on low-income families. Again, how can this be seen as the logical step when so many in our Nation are simply trying to recover and rebuild from the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic?

If the administration has its way, Americans should prepare for higher taxes, less income, less opportunity, and more government mandates.

Ms. Yellen seems to think the solution to America's economic woes is more government, more taxes, more regulation, not more individual opportunity. That is wrong and will only send us further into debt and our families further into despair.

Based on what I have heard, I am concerned and, frankly, disturbed by what is being offered as the future of America's economic policy. When I ran for the Senate, I did so to fix Washington's broken way of doing things. We have to address Washington's unconscionable need to waste tax dollars on things that don't actually help or even hurt American families, especially working families and those on fixed incomes. I will never give up this fight.

In 2018, Ms. Yellen was quoted speaking about the unsustainable U.S. debt and said: "If I had a magic wand, I would raise taxes." We know that is not the real answer to solving our debt issue. It is simply the lazy, liberal approach.

It is time to get value out of every dollar we spend and make hard choices that actually help families and ensure a strong economic future for our Nation.

I cannot support the nomination of a candidate who proudly promotes Joe Biden's policies to mortgage our kids' and grandkids' futures with irresponsible and shortsighted tax spending.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## FILIBUSTER

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, there is a lot going on in the Senate, a lot of activity behind the scenes right now. Leadership of both parties is negotiating a 50-50 power-sharing agreement, which is very important for the Senate and very important for our Nation.

One issue that is being discussed is the status of what is going to happen, possibly—hopefully, nothing is going to happen—with a really important element of the U.S. Senate: the legislative filibuster—something that has been a hallmark of this body almost since the founding of the Republic. This shouldn't be a hard issue.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter, led by Senator COLLINS and Senator COONS, dated April 7, 2017, to the then-majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, and the Democratic leader, Senator SCHUMER.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,  
Washington, DC, April 7, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,  
Majority Leader,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.  
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,  
Democratic Leader,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL AND DEMOCRATIC LEADER SCHUMER: We are writing to urge you to support our efforts to preserve existing rules, practices, and traditions as they pertain to the right of Members to engage in extended debate on legislation before the United States Senate. Senators have expressed a variety of opinions about the appropriateness of limiting debate when we are considering judicial and executive branch nominations. Regardless of our past disagreements on that issue, we are united in our determination to preserve the ability of Members to engage in extended debate when bills are on the Senate floor.

We are mindful of the unique role the Senate plays in the legislative process, and we are steadfastly committed to ensuring that this great American institution continues to serve as the world's greatest deliberative body. Therefore, we are asking you to join us in opposing any effort to curtail the existing rights and prerogatives of Senators to engage in full, robust, and extended debate as we consider legislation before this body in the future.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Collins, Orrin Hatch, Claire McCaskill, Lisa Murkowski, Christopher A. Coons, Joe Manchin, III, John McCain, Patrick J. Leahy, Roger F. Wicker, Luther Strange, Angus S. King, Jr., Michael F. Bennet, Amy Klobuchar, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Martin Heinrich, John Boozman, Lindsey Graham, Richard Burr, Mark R. Warner, Jerry Moran.

Roy Blunt, Marco Rubio, Jeanne Shaheen, Thom Tillis, Sherrod Brown, Shelley Moore Capito, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Brian Schatz, Michael B. Enzi, Dean Heller, Cory A. Booker, Mazie Hirono, Dianne Feinstein, John Thune, Bill Cassidy, Heidi Heitkamp, Jeff Flake, Chuck Grassley, Maria Cantwell, Rob Portman.

Lamar Alexander, John Kennedy, Jon Tester, Thomas R. Carper, Pat Roberts, Margaret Wood Hassan, Tammy Duckworth, Jack Reed, Thad Cochran, Joe Donnelly, Ben

Sasse, Todd Young, Kamala D. Harris, Bill Nelson, Johnny Isakson, Edward J. Markey, Mike Lee, Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon Whitehouse, Robert Menendez, Tim Kaine.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Over 60 Senators in the U.S. Senate—the majority of Republicans and the majority of Democrats—sent this letter to who was then leadership of the Senate, writing, in essence: Don't change the legislative filibuster.

A bunch of Democrats and a bunch of Republicans—I was going to read the names, but they know who they are—the majority on both sides in this body, from both parties, in 2017 said: Don't change it. This shouldn't be something the U.S. Senate changes.

Part of the reason this was going on was that, at the time, then-President Trump was pressing Senators, particularly Majority Leader McConnell, to change the filibuster. The filibuster requires 60 votes to move legislation in the Senate. It requires compromise. It requires bipartisanship. It is what makes us different from the House. At the time, then-Republican President Trump was saying: Change it. I want legislation to move more quickly.

The Republicans and then-Majority Leader McConnell said that it was not a good idea. As a matter of fact, most of us said that it was not a good idea, so we didn't do anything. We didn't change it because we didn't want to change the nature of the U.S. Senate.

This is one of the issues being discussed right now, but it shouldn't be a difficult issue because, as I said, the vast majority of Senators in this body, a couple of years ago, said: Don't do it. We don't want the Senate to just become a smaller version of the House, because that is what would happen if you were to get rid of the legislative filibuster.

I do want to extend my congratulations to the new majority leader as of yesterday, Senator Schumer, but to the new majority leader: This should not be a difficult issue. This should not be something that we are having a problem with in terms of the negotiations between the Democrats and the Republicans that delays the power-sharing agreement. This should be a piece of cake. Just a couple of years ago, the vast majority of Democrats and Republicans said: Don't change the legislative filibuster. We want to make sure that remains the case.

I think, for the new majority leader, this would be an act of statesmanship, an act of compromise, and would certainly make the statement that he is going to keep the Senate the same as it has been for decades, for centuries. Changing the legislative filibuster would change the entire structure, history, and precedent of this very important body in our country, so it shouldn't be hard. The vast majority of the Democrats and Republicans has already agreed to this.

To our new majority leader: Do what you know is right—an act of statesmanship and compromise. We have all

been talking about it. It should not be a difficult decision, particularly given that so many Senators on both sides of the aisle feel strongly enough to have written Senator Schumer and Senator McConnell just a couple of years ago on this.

To all of my colleagues who signed that letter—you know who you are—make sure you are pressing the new majority leader to stick to what you pressed him on just a couple of years ago. It is important.

#### NOMINATION OF LLOYD JAMES AUSTIN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I also want to talk about another important issue, and that is President Biden's nomination for the very important job of Secretary of Defense, Mr. Lloyd Austin. We are going to be voting on his nomination here on the Senate floor in a couple of hours.

I had the honor of introducing Mr. Austin just 2 days ago at his confirmation hearing, and I thought the confirmation hearing went well. So I want to talk a little bit about Mr. Austin before we take what will essentially be two important votes for his confirmation.

Now, the last time I was actually on the floor of the U.S. Senate, our Capitol was under siege, and from a foreign policy and national security perspective, America's authoritarian rivals have been gloating over what happened on that day. They have been reveling in our disunity. Democracy brings chaos, they tell their people. It is better to have a strong hand that keeps order. Well, as you know, we do live in an imperfect democracy, no doubt, and the American I was honored to introduce at the Armed Services hearing the other day, Mr. Lloyd Austin, understands our imperfections more than many.

Yet, on closer inspection, the world's dictators have little to celebrate. Congress went back to work on January 6, right here on the Senate floor, to count electoral votes, and yesterday there was a peaceful transfer of power at the top of our government, as there has been since our Republic's founding.

At some point—maybe sooner than we think—Chinese and Russian citizens are going to ask: Hey, why can't we do that? Why don't we have strong, resilient institutions that ensure the regular elections of new leaders and that invest in self-government and the people?

When these citizens ask these questions of authoritarians like Putin or Xi Jinping, they are not going to be gloating anymore because they won't have answers to these questions.

So what does this all have to do with Mr. Lloyd Austin? A lot. Mr. Austin has been nominated to lead one of America's most trusted institutions—the Department of Defense. Many of us have worked hard over the last few years to rebuild our military's strength

and readiness, but I think we can all agree that there has been too much turmoil at the top at the Pentagon. As its civilian leader, I am confident that Mr. Austin will bring steadiness, leadership, and respect to this indispensable American institution.

I got to know Mr. Austin in 2005 and 2006 while serving together in an Army-heavy combatant command as we conducted combat operations throughout the Middle East. We had what might be referred to today as an unequal power relationship. He was a two-star general. I was a major. He had spent years on Active Duty. I was a reservist. He was a soldier. I was a marine. I was just one of hundreds of field-grade infantry officers who had been recalled to Active Duty and deployed in the region during a challenging time for our Nation. Yet, when I asked for his time, Mr. Austin gave it. When I had a problem, he listened. When I asked for help on an important mission, he provided it.

A critical hallmark of exceptional leadership, especially for organizations like the Pentagon, is not just how one treats superiors but how one treats subordinates, those down the chain of command. What I saw was respect and integrity and someone who knew how to get things done in a difficult environment.

It is clear to me the core principles of Mr. Austin's life have been duty, honor, country. West Point has done its job. Now, that may sound quaint to some, but I think having individuals of impeccable character at the top of our government is more important than ever. Other than integrity, there is no singular requirement for the difficult job of Secretary of Defense, and as the former Director of the Joint Staff and as the former CENTCOM Commander, Mr. Austin certainly has insight on critical issues, such as interagency budget battles, working with allies, and congressional oversight.

Mr. Austin is also fully committed to the constitutional principle of civilian control of our military—something that those who serve in uniform typically understand and revere more than those who don't. In that regard, you may recall that, about 10 days ago, we had a hearing in the Committee on Armed Services on this very important topic, but I actually thought some of the witnesses had rather simplistic views of this important issue.

They had brought up topics and discussions of so-called "military logic" by those who wear the uniform versus "political logic" for those who don't wear the uniform.

So let me play devil's advocate for those who participated and watched that hearing.

The very nature of the confirmation hearing that we had with Mr. Austin just 2 days ago and, indeed, the very nature of the transfer of power that we saw yesterday here at the Capitol are evidence, in my view, that the civilian control of the military is not at risk in